

WWMD?



What would Montessori do?



Small print - A question not to be answered, but pondered...

IX IMAGINATION

The creative imagination of science is based upon truth. If a century ago some one had told the men who were traveling in stage coaches and using oil lamps, that some day New York would blaze with light at midnight, that men would ask for succor in mid ocean and that their message would be understood on land, that their flight in the air would surpass that of the eagle, our good forefathers would have smiled incredulously. Their imaginations would never have been able to conceive these things. To them, modern men would have seemed almost like men of another species. This is because the imagination of modern men is based upon the positive researches of science, whereas the men of past ages allowed their minds to wander in the world of unreality. This single fact has changed the face of the world.

The Advanced Montessori Method
Dr. Maria Montessori, 1917

Adaptability - that is the most essential quality;
for the progress of the world is continually
opening new careers, and at the same time
closing or revolutionizing the traditional types of
employment.

The Erdkinder [Earth-child]

A Scheme for the Reform of Secondary Education

Dr. Maria Montessori

Bulletin of the English Montessori Society

Spring 1956

Dr. Montessori recommended that an area of the Elementary school classroom have “technology of the times”, so that children would learn to use it. This suggests that if she were to set up an Elementary classroom today, she would put a sample computer or two in Elementary. At issue here, as I see it, is not what she would do, but to what extent and under what circumstances computers can help children toward leading meaningful lives as useful, contributing members to society. These should be the criteria in making educational decisions.

Some adults think children must master computers as early as possible to succeed in today's world. But studies have not shown that, all things being equal, having computers in the classroom assists children. Sometimes computers are used well, but other times they seem to even distract from the educational mission, so the task becomes how to master the technicalities of PowerPoint rather than how to find, analyze, judge, integrate, and communicate information, which children learn quite well from books with much less expense to the school (Oppenheimer, 2003). Computers not only incur expense at initial purchase, but are tremendously expensive to keep up to date. There is no evidence that the educational benefit they confer is commensurate with their expense.

I once heard someone observe that what young children need to learn about is the world of nature and the world of people. Computers are not the best medium for either, although properly programmed, they could help with both (and yet why

bother, if one can present people and nature directly?). James O. Freedman, president emeritus of Dartmouth University, told graduates of the University of Rochester in May 2002:

Telephones, televisions, VCRs, fax machines, computers, the Internet, email, cell-phones, beepers, and all these forms of instant communication often create a bewildering barrage of noise and frenetic movement. It is almost as if we have surrounded ourselves with such technology in order to avoid suspended moments of silence and contemplation.

If we are to succeed in preserving our individuality against such technological tyranny, we need to slow the tempo of our lives and extend the span of our attention. We need to emphasize a form of humane education that helps students to establish a rich interior life and an enduring openness of mind. A sturdy, private self where self-examination can occur. (New York Times, 6/2/02)

Montessori environments offer children that quiet...

Angeline Stoll Lillard

Montessori – The Science Behind the Genius

Oxford University Press US, 2008

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"What purpose would education serve in our days unless it helped humans to a knowledge of the environment to which they have to adapt themselves?"

Maria Montessori

The liberty of the child ought to have as its limit the collective interest of the community in which he moves; its form expressed in what we call manners and good behavior. It is our duty to prevent the child from doing anything which may offend or hurt others, and to check the behavior which is unbecoming or impolite.

The Discovery of the Child

First Published - 1948

Maria Montessori

What would Montessori do?



*More importantly, why does
it matter?*

"What purpose would education serve in our days unless it helped humans to a knowledge of the environment to which they have to adapt themselves?" - Maria Montessori

The American Montessori Society encourages and supports exploring the use of technology in Montessori educational environments, especially at the elementary and higher levels. Using technology is appropriate and desirable for teachers and school administrators, and also for a variety of student uses. Intelligently integrated into the Montessori environment, technology can be a valuable communications tool and may promote traditional Montessori tenets.

Information technology is an important part of the world in which our children live and which they will inherit. It has become an essential communications medium of modern times. A guide for using technology should allow children to follow their own interests, to learn as appropriate to their individual styles, and to achieve independence as lifelong learners. Although children in the two and a half to six year age group need to have extensive manual and other direct sensorial activities, there are uses that can be implemented by the director, for material preparation, planning and record keeping. At higher levels, technology may enhance student research through the ability to access and exchange information in global learning communities. Both parents and teachers must be conscientious in teaching and modeling appropriate and responsible use of technology.

The basis of adding any new or different piece of material to the Montessori environment must be to nurture the development of the child. Technology is no different. Just as extensive training is required for the correct use of the traditional Montessori materials, there is certainly a need for careful guidance in the appropriate use of classroom technology. As with the Montessori materials, there is a learning curve for the suitable use of technology. In the application of technology in the Montessori classroom the key principle should be that it must be carefully thought out and integrated so that it complements, but does not replace any part of the Montessori approach or curriculum.

As we move into the 21st Century, our children will be expected to have digital age literacy, inventive thinking skills, effective communication skills, and high productivity skills. Efficient use of technology as well as basic Montessori practice can aid in achieving these objectives.

It is important to remember that technology and its applications, such as computers and software, evolve and change rapidly from year to year. The needs of the youngest children however do not change with the changes in society. As they grow and become socialized, responsible use of technology will be a part of their classrooms and their lives. Because of

the rapidly changing nature of technology, its application in Montessori environments will need to be under relatively continuous review. Such an ongoing review must consider technology's place in the Montessori environment and the developmental appropriateness of available software.

Maria Montessori used extensive scientific observation to uncover the "secret of childhood." From those understandings, she created beautiful hands-on materials that enhance learning through the senses. Technology offers us another tool and another method of discovery. Using Montessori's methods of observing will help us determine the place of technology in the Montessori world.

The American Montessori Society (AMS) is a non-profit education society founded in 1960, whose purpose is to help children develop their potential through the educational principles of Dr. Maria Montessori. This includes the following: developing Montessori programs, accrediting schools, granting credentials, encouraging research, organizing conferences and symposia, and promoting all other areas which relate to the dissemination of Montessori philosophy.